

"Man-on-the-Street", Austin, Texas, December 9, 1941

AFS 6369A

John Henry Faulk: Mr. Sorrells, you've heard about the war being declared Sunday. What do you think about it? I mean the Japanese starting the war on Sunday, what do you think about that?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I tell you, I don't know in a way that the [failure (?)] for Japanese ??? going to take the lead ??? think anything about ??? the United States will just have to go on into it.

John Henry Faulk: Do you think the Japanese had any business starting a fight like that?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I tell you, I don't think so. That's the ??? that the United States wasn't bothering them, you know? Wasn't their territory or nothing and I don't think they have any right to cause an attack.

John Henry Faulk: Well, what did you think when you heard about it? What was your reaction to the Japanese? Did you feel that they had started a war for themselves?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I don't know. I tell you, I think, I believe they're talking for themselves. Anyway, I don't suppose they ought to have been starting a war, ???

John Henry Faulk: Well, why do you reckon they went ahead and jumped on the United States like that, Mr. Sorrells?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I tell you, it just depends. I don't think the United States had ever done anything to them as far as that's concerned. It just depends on how they were feeling ??? I tell you, ??? to declare war on the United States, why that forced the United States to have to do something, anyhow.

John Henry Faulk: That's right.

Willie Sorrells: There's no other way for them to get out of there or something or other.

John Henry Faulk: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*]. Do you feel they had any right to start a war with the United States?

Willie Sorrells: I know, I don't feel that they had any right to start war with the United States, no.

John Henry Faulk: Well, then it follows that the United States did the only thing she could. Roosevelt did all the things he could.

Willie Sorrells: Yeah, I think he done all he could to keep out of this war as far as that's concerned. I think he just done everything he knows how to do because he's always been against wars. And he's been very clever on that on that I thought in a way.

John Henry Faulk: But you're behind his declaration of war.

Willie Sorrells: I'm behind his declaration of war as far that's concerned, ??? if there's any fighting that they happen to want me why I'd be willing to go and fight for my country you know, and do all that I can because I was in the World War as far as that's concerned, but I —

John Henry Faulk: You were? That's right, you did go on, didn't you?

Willie Sorrells: Yeah, I was in the World War, but I'm willing to go back and do all that I can for our country.

John Henry Faulk: You would volunteer again?

Willie Sorrells: I would volunteer again if it's necessary to happen. I'd volunteer again, go out and fight for my country.

John Henry Faulk: Good for you. You feel like America's worth defending?

Willie Sorrells: Sure, because I was born and raised in the United States and I'm bound —

John Henry Faulk: Good.

Willie Sorrells: — going to fight for my country, you know. To help defend the country all I know how and can.

John Henry Faulk: Well, do you think that's the general opinion of the Negroes? Do you find that your friends all feel that way or are they against war?

Willie Sorrells: Yeah. All of my friends that I have talked with yes, and have talked since this war was declared that feel just like I feel about it. They're willing to go and do all they can for their country, you know.

John Henry Faulk: I believe that's the general opinion amongst the Negroes. Certainly, amongst my friends, and I have a great many of them.

Willie Sorrells: Well, I have a good many myself and of the ones I've talked with and ??? the white people ??? —

John Henry Faulk: They're ready to go to war.

Willie Sorrells: They's all willing.

John Henry Faulk: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*]. You're on the W.P.A., aren't you?

Willie Sorrells: I'm on the WPA.

John Henry Faulk: Well, have you heard the WPA workers talking on it?

Willie Sorrells: Yeah, they all say they are willing to go and fight for their liberties, their country. And of course that's, you know that's about all a person can do, you know, if he's willing to go and fight for his country. He couldn't do anymore than that, than to fight for his country. ??? [I hear them say they all willing to go fight for their country (?)].

Course I tell you my ??? son he's ??? as far as I know of and I learned about to it was a whole he's just taking all he can take anyway, you know. That's the way I feel about it. What I learned about is he's just taken all he could take because he's, I think I heard of him, sinking a whole lot of his ships. I suppose, three or four anyway. He has taken all of that. And this time why, these Japs come over there and destroyed some of his men, you know, like I say —

John Henry Faulk: ??? that now.

Willie Sorrells: The men was destroyed why of course he's ??? we couldn't afford to lose that many men and then not do nothing about it. They've got to come to some consideration over there, you know, for the men's lives is lost.

John Henry Faulk: Now, how do you think the United States is going to come out in this war?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I tell you just the way I feel about it, I believe that from the ??? World War, I believe it will be just like it was done in the World War. I believe in the United States, I believe in ??? capturing his enemies anyway.

John Henry Faulk: Do you think the war's going to be a long one or a short one?

Willie Sorrells: Well, I believe it will be a long war. I believe it will be a long kind of war, as far as that's concerned. Because —

John Henry Faulk: You think Germany and Italy is going to get in on the side of Japan?

Willie Sorrells: Well, that's my belief about it ???. Germany and Italy is going to come in.

John Henry Faulk: Well, do you think we're fighting . . . this time, do you think we've got just as much reason to be fighting as we had last time, when we fought last time or went to war last time?

Willie Sorrells: Yeah I do. I do believe we have just as much right now to fight as we did the first time because on the count of the lives we lost, our citizens.

John Henry Faulk: Mm, hmm [*affirmative*].

Willie Sorrells: We compelled and ought to look out for our citizens. Citizens, ??? you know, wasn't bothering nobody. Why, you know he be just like you. A man was out there and you seen him and you wasn't bothering him and he wasn't bothering you before or nothing like that and they just come in and killed one of your friends or kill up a bunch of your friends and you were there to defend that you know, you'd go and do something.

John Henry Faulk: Sure. Sure.

Willie Sorrells: And keep — if he'd done bothered your friend and killed up your friends, you see. He might have killed your friend, and if you was there, he's going to fight you all you can, you see, because he's done wrong when he come in and —

John Henry Faulk: And that's just what Japan's done.

Willie Sorrells: Sure. See, that's just what Japan done. They done wrong when they come over there on that territory and killed the men and them men wasn't bothering them . Now they tell me that Japan never notified, giving any notified, or nothing that they were going to do that.